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JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L PESHAWAR 000381

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PK](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: FRONTIER CORPS COMMANDER ON JUNE 10 MOHMAND INCIDENT,
CURRENT CHALLENGES

REF: PESHAWAR 359

CLASSIFIED BY: Lynne M. Tracy, Principal Officer, Consulate
Peshawar, State.
REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

Summary

11. (C) Inspector General of the Frontier Corps, Major General Alam Khattak told the Counselor of the Department of State, Dr. Eliot Cohen and Peshawar PO on June 26 that the morale of his troops had been badly shaken in the wake of the June 10 incident on the Mohmand Agency/Afghanistan border that left 11 of his troops dead. He requested that the United States assist the families of the dead and noted that his troops remain woefully under-equipped. He described the Frontier Corps' struggle to keep up with evolving militant tactics and was frustrated by his failure to win public support through the media. Two weeks after the June 10 incident, Khattak was serious and cordial but visibly emotional and genuinely questioned whether the strike was intentional. Counselor noted the importance of the joint investigation taking place and the need to improve cooperation. Khattak agreed but declared that rebuilding trust will be required first. End Summary.

Khattak on the June 10 Mohmand Incident

12. (C) Inspector General of the Frontier Corps (IGFC) Major General Alam Khattak told Counselor and Peshawar PO on June 26 that the June 10 Mohmand Incident (reftel) had shaken the morale of his troops. He cited a running tally of 316 troops killed in action, and over 600 wounded as evidence of the Frontier Corps' commitment to the war on terror. Khattak said that it is "hard to explain our strategy to the families of these men" in the wake of the June 10 attack. He said that it will take time to "reestablish trust" between the United States and GOP security forces.

13. (C) Khattak offered a similar version of the events on June 10 as provided by Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) Governor Ghani to Ambassador (reftel). According to Khattak, Afghan National Army (ANA)/NATO forces were discussing the establishment of a border post and had later fallen back inside Afghanistan. Khattak was later informed that the ANA/NATO forces had been ambushed within Afghanistan while Frontier Corps troops were engaged nearby with militants in a separate incident. The IGFC pointedly asked why his post was bombed "so far back from the border; we take that this was done on purpose."

14. (C) Referring to the traditional black shalwar kamis uniform of the Frontier Corps, Khattak conceded that "everyone in the tribal areas can look like one of us." He requested, however, that the USG should "do something for the families of these men." The IGFC stated that doing so would be a welcome and important gesture. Counselor emphasized the need for joint postings with U.S. and Frontier Corps troops, such as at Border Coordination Centers, as an important tool for helping soldiers bond as well as for tactical coordination. Responding to a query by Counselor regarding the lack of Pakistani participation at Border Coordination Centers, Khattak stated that "he had raised the issue with senior military officials."

Keeping Up With Evolving Militant Tactics

15. (C) Khattak said that the Frontier Corps' operations had "become reactive because the Taliban [and local militants] have the initiative." "Fighting them is like chasing a moving shadow," he said. He characterized the militants as "well integrated" and claimed that the thread of al-Qai'da "runs through everything," particularly in the south where Mullah Omar's influence was concentrated. Militants, he said, "have gone from using improvised explosive devices, to suicide bombers and, now they are threatening our cities." Khattak stated the militants "come out with a new tactic every six months." Khattak said that the Frontier Corps needed to evolve and adapt as well.

16. (C) "This is an infantry war," he said, and the United States needs to increase its troop presence on the Durand Line in order to stop cross-border attacks. He said that the Frontier Corps had 10 border posts for every one ANA post on the border. Khattak believed that having sufficient numbers of troops on either side of the border would simplify a commander's task to "defending his territory." He said that a lack of troops has led both sides to blame the other. The IGFC admitted, however, that increased troop presence would not be able to stop cross-border movements altogether. Referring to a number of tribes that straddle the Durand Line, he asked "how can you stop the movement of a river with a stick?" Instead, the IGFC reasoned, coalition and Pakistani forces must work together to regulate the flow of cross-border travelers (he did not offer specifics on how this could be accomplished).

17. (C) Khattak said that his efforts had been further frustrated by equipment shortages. He said only 8 percent of his men had personal protective gear and only one third of the Frontier Corps' 12 new wings have their basic equipment. He described the U.S. assistance program as a "trickle effect" and criticized the Warsak Training Center as occupying a "lower" position on the Frontier Corps' list of priorities. Increased ground mobility, additional weaponry, communications equipment, improved medical services and personal protective equipment were of greater urgency, he said, to carry out properly his mandate. He acknowledged with gratitude past INL assistance.

Frontier Corps Losing the Media War

18. (C) Khattak expressed his frustration with media "noise" by handing Counselor a copy of a June 22 article from The Observer entitled "Pakistan troops 'aid' Taliban." The article alleged that the Frontier Corps is "heavily infiltrated and influenced by Taliban militants who sometimes join in attacks on coalition forces." The article stated that "box loads" of classified U.S. "after action reports" corroborate this accusation. With no public affairs/communications staff, Khattak noted that responding to these sort of allegations was extremely difficult.

Taking Cues from the "Political Government"

19. (C) The IGFC stated that the military is a "tool to be used to create an environment for other tools to work" and that the political government's "policy of engagement" will, in turn,

assist the Frontier Corps when force is required again. According to Khattak, peace deals undertaken by the political government should be aimed at "isolating insurgents, so the next time we go into battle we have the support of the people." Khattak's troops have already noted several violations of the peace deals such as cross border movement, but he stated that he was waiting for "direction" from the elected government.

Comment

¶10. (C) Khattak was cordial but solemn in the wake of the June 10 incident in Mohmand. He was clearly disturbed by the deaths of his soldiers. Khattak was equally affected by the negative press reporting directed at the Frontier Corps that was spawned by a recent DOD-funded RAND report on counter-insurgency in Afghanistan, alleging Frontier Corps was aiding the Taliban. We note that the report offered no evidence beyond citing press articles, nearly all of which did not even mention Frontier Corps. The door still appears to be open for cooperation with Frontier Corps -- a force that will remain an important component of the tribal areas complex security arrangements. The outcome of the joint investigation remains the key starting point to rebuilding trust between forces on the border.

TRACY